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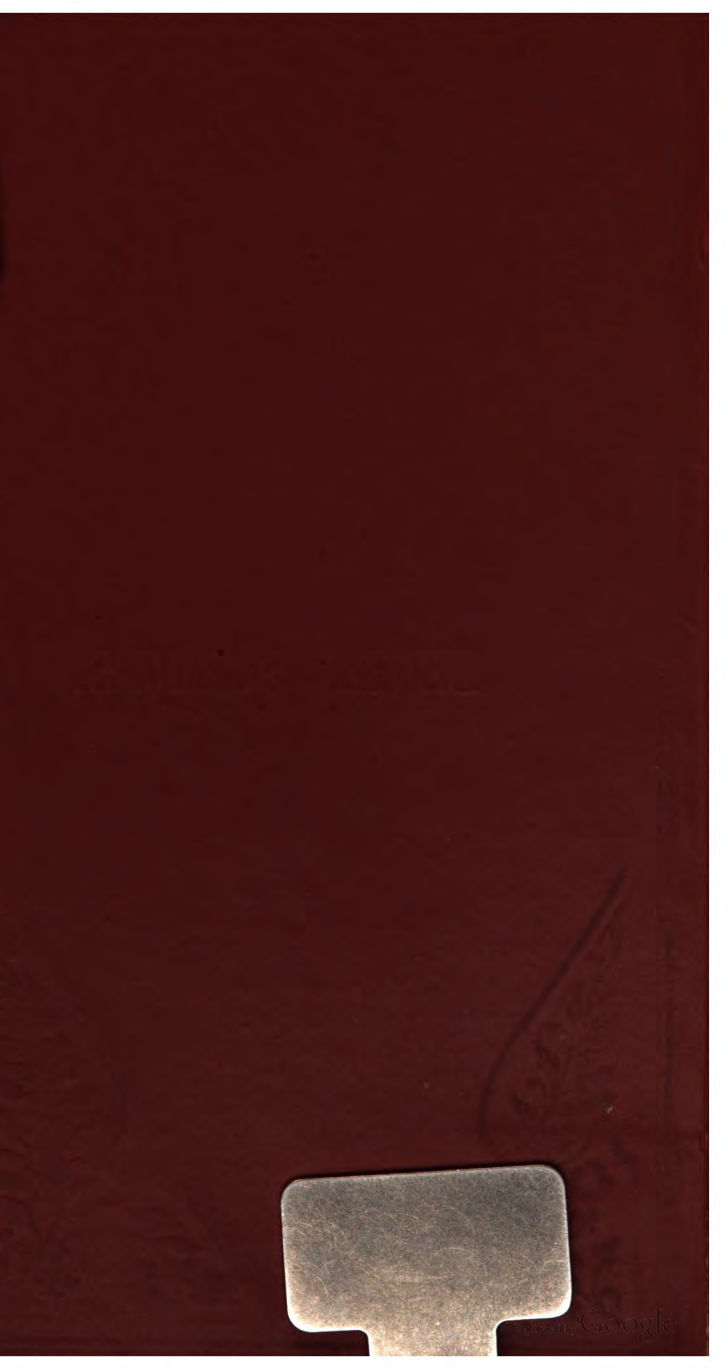
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LENTEN SERMONS.

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"CURE AND REGIMEN OF THE SOUL."

LENTEN

SERMONS,

PREACHED

IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF LIVERPOOL.

BY THE

REV. W. H. DENNY, M.A.

LONDON:
RIVINGTONS, WATERLOO PLACE.

1858.

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TO AN OLD

AND VALUED FRIEND,

THESE SERMONS

ARE

DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

THE origin of the publication of these sermons was the following:—Members of the congregation amongst whom I am privileged to minister had often asked me to put some of my sermons in print. A friend, to whom I dedicate them, and whom I had the pleasure of meeting after a long interval, suggested to me that it would be well to accede to this request, because, notwithstanding the multitudes of superior discourses which pass through the press, a sermon of one known to the reader is generally read with more interest. Two previously published having had a rather large circulation, were, I have reason to believe, the means of doing some good. Hence I have selected a few which struck me as practical, and should they be blest to the awakening, instruction, or comfort of but one soul, I shall rejoice.

I humbly venture to make one request of the reader, that he will not read the first sermon without reading the second, which is meant to be its continuation.

W. H. DENNY.

Liverpool, June, 1858.

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CURE AND REGIMEN OF THE SOUL.

THE SOUL EXAMINED.

"LET US SEARCH AND TRY OUR WAYS, AND TURN AGAIN UNTO THE LORD."—LAMENTATIONS III. 40.

IN the case of a diseased frame, the first care of the physician is what is called *analysis*. When the patient is subjected to his treatment, at the outset he examines the case. He knows the laws which regulate the functions of the healthy frame, and the suspension of some one or more of these is the cause of the disorder. But in different cases, different laws have been infringed upon, and hence a vast *variety of maladies* is brought under his notice. In some, the disarrangement is trifling; in others, serious. In some a vital part refuses to act with vigour; in others, an extremity. In some, slight disorder is apparent, which bids fair to increase into something alarming; and in some there is great apparent disorder, but little real. From some all healthy functions seem to have departed, and from the lessening of one evil another may become aggravated; while some have naturally a tendency to, or are possessed by, particular diseases, hereditary or acquired; and the malady may be weakened, but cannot be rooted out. Under such circumstances, to attempt a cure without examination, to apply a remedy without a knowledge of the symptoms, is considered only the result of neglect, or folly, or presumption. So still

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more with the surgeon. If a disorganisation of the frame from fracture or morbid growth occur; if a wound have separated its parts, or a deep abscess eaten away its strength and materials, the injured or diseased portion will be subjected to examination before the knife is applied or anything is done. The first step of the physician or surgeon is the same—examination. With the knowledge of the constituents of healthy action in their minds, with the idea of the perfect frame before them, having examined the unsound and contrasted it with the sound, they are aware of the deficiency or excess; and the requisite treatment to repair or supply it being known, they act accordingly.

Now, we think that their conduct supplies us with a valuable lesson in the cure of the soul. *Men are diseased*, but they are certainly diseased *in different forms*. All, no doubt, have contracted the one defilement—the one hereditary malady from their fore-father, the first man. But bodily disease presents not a greater variety of phases than does this spiritual malady. Some are naturally unbelieving, profane, disobedient, more than others. And these latter, again, though not particularly afflicted by these disorders, are proud, covetous, lascivious, prone to gluttony or drunkenness, or similar sins. And in some, though in these two classes of disease there be less tendency to eruption, yet injustice, lying, uncharitableness, hatred, malice, or contentiousness may lurk, and upon occasion be called into action. And some appear to be born with their souls the seat of a complicated system of maladies, and all three classes of evil seem deep-rooted. And some, again, have acquired many maladies from contact with a contagious atmosphere, and caught infection which naturally they did not possess, or increased that they did possess. And with some there is some one malady which exceeds and prevails over every other, which

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was naturally theirs, and has artificially been fostered, to which they are slaves, which accompanies them always, and flows through their life's blood, bringing an incurable virus, which taints and vitiates the whole immortal principle.

When, then, a cure has to be wrought in cases like these, and such a variety of spiritual maladies have to be dealt with, certainly to command complete success, generally to command success at all, there must be at the very beginning an *examination of the cases*. Each case must be opened out plainly before the view, or it is impossible that anything like a healing can take place. Did the Holy Spirit, the direct Physician, take the human case altogether into his own hands, and, with no exertion upon the individual's part, make him whole,—did the spiritual relief come through the channels of mercy with no regard to the assent or operation of the patient,—there would be no occasion for self-examination. But this is hardly the case with the body, and certainly it is not with the soul. Unless the assent of the patient is gained to a cure, the imagination is known to obstruct the action of medicine, however specific, and the man can with difficulty be cured of the commonest disorder. However, in the case of the soul nothing can be done without the movement of the individual. Even though in some cases of bodily cure the patient may be with propriety advised to remain passive, lest he mar the success of the operation, in all spiritual cases the patient must be advised to be up and doing if he hope for success. Indeed here is the most important difference, among the many analogies between bodily and spiritual cures. We would have you remark that in the cure of the body *the same physician examines and administers the remedy*, though he do not profess to accomplish the whole cure, whereas in the cure of the soul, *the examination is alone human, the ad-*

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ministration of the remedy is divine. By this difference, of course, is correspondingly increased the importance of examination in the spiritual case. It is *the only thing* in the healing of his soul *left to the individual* to perform. But this much we do consider belongs to the individual. To assert that the Divine Spirit, the Physician of the fallen and diseased soul, accomplishes the whole cure without any act of the mind of the man himself, would be to state what Scripture does not sanction, the immediate effect of which must be to engender an utter neglect and apathy, and what moreover cannot be received, for it is plainly opposed to human experience. Did any one ever hear of a man leaving off the sins of covetousness, drunkenness, lying, or uncleanness (to take four common and prevalent forms of spiritual disease), without first knowing his sin, and himself as sinful, by a process of at least partial self-examination. We never heard or read of such a case, much less have we witnessed it. It is *nothing to the purpose to say that the first motion to this examination came down from above.* We are aware that all good suggestions come from God, but this is beside the question. We are dealing with *the fact, not with its cause.* We say that the process of self-examination by man previous to his spiritual cure, is *a fact,*—a fact as sure in, and more necessary to, his healing, than is the analysis of the physician in the bodily case. We are persuaded this is the first step in the cure, and that this step must be taken, if it has not been already, by every one of you. We cannot see how, if a man do not ponder over and hold an investigation of his case, his salvation is possible. God forbid that we should lay down the dogma that God's mercy has never embraced a sinner without it, but we are persuaded the number is few indeed. Sin cannot be repented of unless it is seen, known, and thought over. Remember, brethren, that repentance is

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the first source, so far as we can know, of Divine sympathy with the sinner. For practical purposes, we need not travel beyond the teaching of the parable of the prodigal son. It is useless to intrude into the counsels and designs of God. Now repentance is only vague and incomplete, indeed no repentance at all, if it be not special. The particular sins of the sinner must be laid open before him, or he cannot be penitent. He is no penitent who is sorry for a life of sin, but knows not, nor cares to inquire, wherein he has sinned. Hence self-examination is indispensable to repentance. Yes! a stopping and holding up of our cases before the mind's eye, and looking upon them with sorrowful contemplation, this is the first movement Zionward. Looking back over the scene of past life, and collecting its separate details, and forming them into a whole, not resting content with merely drawing the haze from off the landscape and bestowing on it a vague and hasty glance, but the filling it in steadily with its hills of decided presumptuous sins and its valleys of sad neglect, its rivers of continual and regular transgression and its forests of frailties; such self-examination is the forerunner of all deep and heartfelt sorrow for sin and pardon through Christ.

Now, brethren, as it is our desire this Lent that you should pass with us through the course of a sinner in his progress heavenward, from the time that he searches and tries his ways to that wherein he can meditate upon God with pleasure,—from the first step in religious life to that advanced state in which divine things prove a delight,—we have chosen self-examination this morning for consideration as the first and absolutely necessary duty. From this search and trial of your ways we hope to pass on to *repentance and faith, to watching, fasting, devout meditation, and the satisfaction and arming of the soul.*

Sins have been divided in many ways and into many

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heads when gleaned from the pages of scripture, that men might more readily understand the evil of their doings. They are called sins of omission or neglect of duty, shortcomings, and sins of commission over-stepping duty, misdoings. Likewise, as respects their province or sphere of operation, they have been called sins of thought, word and deed. Christ has divided duties into two great commandments,—*love to God and love to our neighbour;* and many since following that division have thought fit to add, for the sake of distinctness, love or regard to ourselves. But we humbly consider this as unnecessary, and prefer, even for clearness' sake, to add nothing to the Divine division; for it will be found that all duties we owe to ourselves we also owe to God, the author of our life, motion and being; and, indeed, to our fellow-creatures, whom our example must influence. To God more especially do we owe it to be specimens, honourable specimens, of his handiwork. Hence we shall class under duties to Him those personal ones which we may have occasion to notice. And it is clear, my brethren, that we cannot hope to lay before you all those works by an examination of your obedience to which you can ascertain the nature of your ways. Some of the most prominent we shall select, and hope, by the Lord's blessing, we may be the instrument of provoking you to the good work of self-examination. We think it preferable to adopt the negative mode of noticing the sins rather than the duties, the unsound rather than sound, as a rule; but we hope to notice both as far as our limits will permit, that by contrast you may estimate the nature of both disease and health,—of the corrupt soul totally defiled, and of the soul imperfect, indeed, but yet pure.

You will immediately see that the greatest sin against God is *infidelity*, a doubting Him to exist, or preside over his works, or to have revealed himself in

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his word. This is most grievous of all sins, and is generally found to be the last, the final, and almost incurable spiritual malady. When a man has become defiled with every transgression, he begins to hope, and ultimately to reason himself into the conclusion that there is no God; or, if there be, that the Bible is not his word,—that it is the composition of men for their own purposes, and unworthy of attention by enlightened people; and that he need not fear, for there is no danger. Such a man is "condemned already." If you search your hearts and find any thoughts of this kind, know that they are inexcusable, and that the soul that dies harbouring them cannot be saved. The man in whom doubt reigns is radically diseased. This deep-seated malady eats out everything good, and must be removed completely, or the Spirit of God will not work, and the soul will remain for ever uncured. Again, remaining in *ignorance* of God, a satisfaction with spiritual darkness, and no thirst for inquiry, is a wilful refusing of knowledge, which argues a dangerous case. Enlightenment is within reach of every mind, however humble; and every one who has an ear to hear can hear, and must hear, or he is inexcusable. But, again, though a man should not be unbelieving or ignorant, he may sin against God. He may *dishonour* Him, by swearing or foolishly taking into his lips his great and holy name, and perhaps out of the same mouth may proceed blessing and cursing. If so, he is diseased, and must resolve to root out a malady, the very name of which is most offensive to every holy ear, and cuts him off necessarily, so long as he continues in it, from Divine favour. But none of these sins may be found, and yet further search requires to be made. He who holds the opinion of foolish men, or his own ease, dearer than God's law, and neglects his ordinances, and refuses publicly and pri-

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vately to worship Him, who disregards God's own day, and either comes to his house irreverently, and conducts himself therein carelessly, or does not come at all; or who spurns his ministers and thinks lightly of their mission; such a man is diseased in these particulars; his soul is the seat of the malady of *irreverence* for sacred things and sacred persons; and as God has instituted and commanded him to honour them, he must learn to know his fault and remove all that furthers it, before the Holy Spirit will condescend to repair the evil and work the cure.

But still, though in these matters a man be not a wilful sinner, he may be corrupt in other and important respects. If gluttony or drunkenness, or, still more, sins of uncleanness and wantonness, defile that soul which God originally formed in his own image; if the heart will gratify and indulge its sinful propensities, and will not curb its lusts; all the prayers of that soul with a rotten core, with a cancerous and loathsome interior, all its reverence, all its cautiousness are useless: the Holy Spirit will not approach it, and no cure can be effected. The Purifier, himself most pure, will not deal with *debauchery*, and will only cleanse that heart which sees and is sensible of its foulness. And though this vile condition of heart and life be absent, yet that heart, whose thoughts are unceasingly set on wealth and honour, which is greedy of gain and distinction, and dissatisfied with its own means and its own sphere,—the heart which, though it refuse not to honour and worship its Maker, yet considers his service of little importance after the period it has occupied, and much inferior to the advantages of the world,—such a discontented *covetous* soul is the subject of the disease of worldliness, a disease which unfits it for the Spirit's operation, renders it hard and indifferent, and thus impervious to the action of the heavenly remedy. Such a soul is generally

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afflicted with the kindred sin of *envy*, and instead of feeling joyous at the prospect of a fellow-creature being prospered by God, it betrays symptoms of sorrow at God's goodness which are unnatural and perilous, and argue a condition of soul deeply disordered. And the man in whose bosom rankles the deadly venom of *pride*, whose thoughts exalt themselves against God, by a contempt of men formed in God's own image, and God's own gifts, perhaps pre-eminently granted to the individual, turn against himself, by parading them as though they were formed by and belonged to the man; such God, who grants grace only to the humble, will resist. He who values himself above what he ought is the subject of a very common spiritual malady, but, nevertheless, so offensive to God that He is said to hate it, and so long as it is wilfully indulged, it seems to present of necessity an obstacle to the cure of the soul.

But though, brethren, wilfully and knowingly you transgressed in none of these points, yet did your examination stop there it would be defective. It is clear that the man who wrongs his neighbour by *defrauding* him of his just debts, or *deceives* him who has placed confidence in him, as well as the *extortioner* who exacts more than his due, and drags the last farthing from the fatherless and widow whom God protects, or oppresses the poor whom he has drawn into his net—such men are unclean. And the *slanderer*, who invents calumnies and stories by which he can injure another; the mischievous ruiner of character, who will go from house to house with his concocted tale; as well as the *uncharitable* who will put bad constructions upon actions done or words spoken, and regard every man and thing with suspicion—men who not only will not do their neighbours any good spiritually or temporally, but prevent those who are so inclined by evil surmises or false accusations—such are corrupt and

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diseased, and while they refuse to see the evil will be unrenewed by divine grace. And if the slanderer, the hypocrite, the deceiver and liar, the oppressor and uncharitable in word and deed, are labouring under positive maladies, what must we say of the *revengeful* and *unforgiving?* There are men, who having, as they think (and how often is it only a thought), been slighted or wronged once in their life-time never forgive it. The name of the individual mentioned, the image of him called to the mind, still more his own self seen, causes a frown and provokes a feeling of bitterness which never subsides, and they remind us cannot subside. With the Lord's Prayer before us, and still more the parable of "the King and debtors," we tell a man so afflicted that he has an obstinate sore festering in the vitals of his immortal spirit, and if not rooted out we know not how the oil and wine from heavenly places can ever come down to cure his natural distemper. No! though all the prayers and sighs and throbs of heart of which his frame is susceptible convulsed his troubled spirit, his soul, containing this bitter root, will continue uncured. Those *fond of* emulations and *strifes*, too, the brawling and clamorous, who if they prevailed universally would make our earth like a hell, who introduce dissension everywhere they go, if their path be not a scene of decided ruin and injury,—surely such have no right to expect that peace of God that bindeth up the wounded spirit.

In these respects, brethren, we would earnestly ask you to search and try your ways. There are many other sins which we have omitted, and must allow you to supply. As parents, as children, as masters, as servants, duties lie upon you. We have merely entered into the sins most commonly committed against God and our neighbour, and from which others flow. You have thus seen that your eternal safety requires that you search

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and try your ways, and the principal subjects of search and trial we have shewn you. When you submit your character to inspection search must of course be especially made for your *besetting sins*. We have all particular sins to which we are prone; and here the devil, who plans our spiritual death, continually assails us, hoping, by these maladies, to put the spirit beyond all probability of cure, and to have it for himself. To all direct your attention, but especially to these. We entreat you, brethren, to search and try your ways. If you refuse, you will not be cured. The Holy Spirit does not effect the cure without the movement of the individual. If your souls or spirits have these sins rooted in them, unless you look them boldly in the face, and seek them out and know them, you will not be saved. If you do so, and look into your ways, God will bless your exertions. He will give you power to see and power to act, and you will become purer and purer until He takes you to Himself. If you would make this self-examination a practice, at least for a time, until you know your characters; if every evening, briefly, before you retire to rest, you would ponder over the acts of the day, and see wherein you have omitted your duty and wherein transgressed, or even every Sunday evening, if that be impossible, and then turn to the Lord in prayer for grace to sin in these respects no more; we know the merits of Christ too well to doubt that this would be the beginning of your cure. Gradually the old sins will disappear beneath the Spirit's regimen: the greater transgressions will give way first, and then the lesser, till, though an imperfect being, you will be so transformed that the Divine eye alone will discern the multitude of your infirmities. But disregard your state, and allow your case to be neglected, and we know equally well that your malady will grow worse and worse, and disease will spread in the soul more

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and more. Sin will rise upon sin, and deeper and deeper will they fasten their roots, till the whole soul becomes corrupt, and the examination becomes awfully perplexed by the endless variety of the complicated disorders. And, together with this, there will be an understanding blinded and too feeble to disentangle the difficulty, by ignorance of the evil nature of that to which it has been so long accustomed. Thus the eve of a life of sin will witness a soul defiled beyond description, and a mind lowered, debased, degraded in its moral sense. And, beloved, we speak with all due caution when we say that without extraordinary workings of divine grace such a soul is decidedly incurable, and that he who has any experienceof the difficulty of a real and true repentance, called in to visit such a case, though he might administer the advice, would despair of success, and would know that he never should prove the instrument of causing conviction of sin. And though he might not feel justified in giving utterance to what would unnecessarily alarm others, yet his heart's recesses would be possessed by the awful truth that that sinner's case was all but hopeless.

Oh, yes! now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Now is the time for self-examination and conviction of sin, while yet your pulse is vigorous, your heart tender, and your understanding clear. Now is the time for feeling your need of Christ, before the eye is dim, the head hoary, and the step feeble. Now is the time for searching your ways, before repentance becomes a difficulty, faith an unintelligible thing, and the Saviour in his unspeakable value incomprehensible. Now is the time for feeling the preciousness of Jesus who saves his people from their sins—who though they be as scarlet can make them white as snow, though they be deep like crimson can make them as wool.

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THE SOUL PENITENT.

"REPENT YE, AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL."—MARK I. 15.

WHEN last we addressed you, we considered what we believe to be ordinarily the first step in the cure of the diseased human soul, namely, Self-examination. We saw that the soul, like the body, should be inspected,—that it should look in upon itself and compute its spiritual condition, or that in the common workings of Divine grace its renewal was impossible. We then reviewed the principal points to be examined, and urged you to look into these tests of your soundness or unsoundness.

We shall suppose, brethren, that you have attended to this first step. We shall imagine that the words spoken by us have taken root and been acted on, and that you have looked in upon your souls and endeavoured to discern their state. We shall imagine not only that you assented to the truths of religion (of which your attendance here may be considered a voucher), but that you have become agents, and that you have passed from the conviction that the cure was necessary in general to the more salutary state of conviction that it was necessary for yourselves. And now, resting upon the supposition that you are aware of the requirements of the gospel, we shall assume *one great conclusion*, to which every wilful sinner before us must have come. We know and have said that the same conclusions in every respect have not been come to by wilful sinners. Some perhaps found themselves nearly altogether corrupt, and, having offended and still offend-

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ing in every point, submitted to examination. Some found themselves burdened with a lesser load of evil; and some found themselves more particularly addicted to some one malady, some prevailing sin, which brings many others in its train. But, though in some respects the conclusions of wilful sinners must and do vary, in one great respect they must be similar, and that is in respect of *the awful consequence.* If diseased with presumptuous deliberate sin in only one point they are accounted diseased in God's sight throughout. This one distemper, as God's word must plainly teach those who have examined themselves and found it, is a deadly disease—and thus there is a radical cure necessary for the man who has only one indulged evil festering in the vitals of his soul. This one poisons the whole soul and sends its noxious virus through the whole spirit, and soul and spirit are unclean. Hence, guided by scripture, we remind you that those who have examined themselves and found *numerous wilful sins*, and those who have examined and found *one, are united together;* they are unsound, they are diseased, corrupt, and therefore guilty before God.

If, then, wilful sinners admit this consequence, *what feeling has it caused* in their minds? As we have said, we suppose them all acquainted with and assenting to Christian truth. They are considered as believing, in the words of one of their own creeds, "that Christ shall come again to judge the quick and dead, and that at his coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account of their own works, and that they that have done evil shall go into everlasting fire." This confessed truth, appalling in its character, but so plain upon the page of God's revelation that it may be reckoned among the first principles of Christ's gospel, belongs to, being applicable to, them. What feeling has this produced?

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Has it worked any emotion? The diseased soul is at present a doomed soul. The blackness of darkness, the worm that never dieth, the torturing conscience, is before that soul. Have wilful sinners forgotten this? If so, let us place it prominently before them. Before all brethren that have found themselves wilful sinners, before the wilfully unbelieving and irreverent, before the wilful swearer, before the wilful drunkard, before the wilfully lascivious, before the wilfully proud, before the wilfully covetous, before the wilful liar and deceiver, before the wilful slanderer, before the wilful extortioner and oppressor, before the wilful backbiter, before the wilfully revengeful, there looms in horrible colours an eternity of woe. This is the alarming truth which the apostle would have us bring before you, and which the Saviour of men so often brought before his hearers, that by the terrors of the Lord they might be persuaded. Now, brethren, there is no shirking this truth. How, then, do you feel under it? Has it caused any effect, or does it cause it? It is scarcely possible it should not. If you know the value of immortal souls, and if you admit that wilful sin destroys them, and if you are obliged to acknowledge that this malady is yours, it is impossible, if you confess with the mouth these three things, that you can be unaffected. We ask you, then, are you in dread? Do you fear this dreadful consequence of your sin? Are you agitated by the image of this truth, as, clothed in words, it rises like a spectre before you? Are you not unsettled and restless? It cannot be you still sleep on in torpor? Is there not a movement in your heart of anxiety. It cannot be that these solemn and awful words fall upon you without power. Do you not fear? Do you not dread the Avenger? Do you not feel the awfulness of God's vengeance and the soul's ruin? Do you not feel disposed to say, as did the convinced of old,

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"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" If so, the first step of repentance is gained, your examination has been profitable, for you are the subjects of *fear*.

But this is not sufficient: your feelings, if they rest here, are wanting in another principle. Fear might drive you to despair, or you might drive it out and relapse into your old state. You may view the probably long time before you and see no immediate danger; or else, the fear continuing, you may be cast down with a sorrow of the world which will work nothing but death. *Love* must be excited in your bosoms. This feeling we would urge upon you, and gladly be the instruments in God's hands of arousing. If ever you loved, brethren, you have "fallen away from your first love." Your love has grown cold by sin, and become less and less as you continued in it. Every sin against God has rendered your heart harder, and abated that softness, that tenderness, that moveableness which it might have once possessed. You have forgotten the goodness of your gracious Father who sent his Son to die for your sins. You have left that Saviour who came into this world of sorrow from his Father's throne, who took your form in a manger, and as a man, a humble man, despised and rejected, trod the earth; who left his word for your guidance and his example for your admonition, and his miraculous acts for your acknowledgment of his power; who fulfilled for you that law that bound you, and sorrowed for you in the garden of Gethsemane; whose brow bore the crown of thorns for *you*, whose righteous spirit was taunted and vexed and grieved for *you*, whose brow bore the crown of thorns for *you*, whose shoulder bore the cross for *you*, who would not pray to his Father when the uplifted cross was before Him for *your* sakes, whose form was extended upon the accursed tree for *you*, whose hands and feet felt the agony of the driven nails for *you*, whose side flowed with blood

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from the pierced wound for *you*, and who sighed out his soul on Calvary's hill, that all might be finished, redemption completed, and a price paid for *you*. You have neglected the invitations, the entreaties, the anxious summonses of the Holy Spirit. Though he has come to you and stands at the door of your hearts, waiting to do you good and save your souls; though with lively interest he regards you, and endeavours by every means to excite your attention, and awaken you from your sleep, and infuse into your hearts a love that passeth knowledge; though unadmitted he still knocks and never ceases his importunity, taking advantage of every remarkable event of your lives, as well as occasions, and times, and seasons suitable to draw you; though in periods of death and depression He has spoken to you, at dead of night has softly whispered accents of sweetness, at mid-day has by the splendour of nature asked for love of its Author, and at evening by the soothing beauty of its stillness has sought to win you; though by everything lovely upon which your eye and mind rests He has tried to move you, exhibiting your Saviour's tenderness and gentleness and meekness, and your God's care in the loveliness of everything around you; though in all these ways, the Holy Spirit has sought you, do you still refuse of his taking you under his guidance, and helping with your infirmities? The Persons of the Holy Trinity are averse from vengeance unless you are ever obstinate. The wise God has by all means possible and consistent with justice been endeavouring to allure you. He will at any time accept your submission as a full discharge for all wrongs, because One Person of the Godhead died to redeem you. The ever-blessed Trinity in Unity, the Three Persons in One God, feel an interest in you. The First pities you as a father pitieth his children. The Second regards you as bought with his blood, his life, his sorrows, his sufferings,

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his degradation. As members of his outward Church however unworthy, as Christians however nominal, as named by his name, though having no interest in his sacrifice, the Second Person of the Trinity sorrows over you. The Blessed Spirit's office and desire is to comfort you, by every exertion to entice you, by every means to work upon you and gain you over, that you may be not only redeemed but saved. Everything, brethren, is in your favour, though you be wilful sinners. All God's entreaties in Scripture are scarce anything but entreaties not to be lost. Every one that thirsteth may come to the waters without money and without price. Though your sins be as scarlet, they may be made white as snow; though deep like crimson, they may be as wool. If a man comes to God he will in no wise cast him out. There is mercy and pardon and grace and love with a God whose name is love. Though God hates the sin he loves the sinner, and asks him, entreats of him, and, as in the prophets, cries unto him, not to continue to do that abominable thing that he hates. So that, beloved brethren, there is nothing wanting but one thing—your *will*. There is no feeling wanting but one—your *love*. Have you then no sorrow, no deep and poignant regret, no heartfelt anguish of soul, for having offended this good, this loving, this gracious Father? Have you nothing more than fear? Have you no longing, no desire, no anxiety to be united to God? Have you no wish to give up past neglect of God's laws, in which you should have walked? Have you no eagerness directing you to Christ, no desire of union with Him. Have you no anxiety to be led by the Divine Comforter, and to have purity diffused through your soul? Oh! if blessings as great as your Father's in heaven were granted you severally by an earthly parent, and you had grieved him and rejected his goodness, and slighted his love, and he had the power of rewarding or punishing,

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but instead of visiting your ingratitude upon you, he still continued his favours,—if you heard when travelling in the paths of sin that he was seeking you, using every means to find you, operating upon you through unseen channels, that you might be induced to return to him, and that with open arms and inestimable treasures his bosom was open to receive you, would you feel nothing but fear of his punishment? Yes! brethren, love would cast out fear in this earthly case. We are sure that with hasty strides you would return, with anxious hearts, with souls full of gratitude, with affections overflowing. There would rise within you a well of love, a spring of anxiety, prompting you to repose upon the breast of your offended parents, and you would feel no peace, no quietness of soul, for the rankling of your affection. Love would arise in your hearts. And why should no such feeling be generated in your souls, as we tell you of your heavenly Father's goodness, of the goodness of the Father, the goodness of the Son, and the goodness of the Holy Ghost? When we tell you that you have strayed, but that the Three are seeking you; that the One only true God, the Trinity in Unity, is looking after you; that He feels for you, though you know it not, and acts upon you, though you perceive it not; that in the regions of darkness and gloom his efforts are exerted, though they be not regarded; that they may be borne upon the wings of unseen seraphs, and wafted upon the winds, though you cannot tell whence they come;—when we tell you this, can it be that no love to God is provoked in your souls? can it be that fear alone agitates your breasts? can it be that you feel no wish to repose in the sunshine of Divine favour, and know your Father, who waits to be gracious? This is the feeling we would excite after fear. If convinced of sin and its punishment you feel fear, and

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if, convinced of God's loving-kindness and tender mercy still exercised towards you, you feel love, the second step of repentance is gained; for the disposition of your hearts is changed; godly repentance has begun; fear and love must, in hearts that assent to the truths of religion, beget hope, and contrition has been generated, the godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of.

Now, brethren, when these two feelings of fear and love have arisen in the human breast, and when they stir and sway the spirits of sinners, however sinful, we believe that God's merciful eye immediately recognises them. When in his course of sin the sinner stops and reflects, and as he ponders upon the awfulness of God's terrors, but yet the greatness of his mercy and goodness, his heart sheds tears (so to speak) of alternate grief and joy, and hope insinuates that all may still be well; these jewels of penitence attract the gaze of the prodigal's Father, and even when a great way off the Almighty sees the contrite soul coming towards Him, and has compassion. We believe that ere a single prayer has passed the penitent's lip; before he has said, "I have sinned against heaven and before Thee," fear and love of God may bring a man through hope to faith. Though the individual have wandered ever so long and so far from his Father's home, true and hearty repentance leads directly to faith. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." What is this belief of the Gospel, then, which follows repentance? *Wherein is that belief peculiar* which God grants to men when godly sorrow and righteous tears have brought Him to their succour and comfort?

We believe that it is peculiar principally in that very fact that *it has been preceded by repentance.* Men believe before they repent, but they do not believe as they believe subsequently to repentance; and the difference

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consists in the repentance itself. Men believe before they repent; for otherwise clearly repentance could not take place. Awe and love could not be generated in their hearts by truths to which they did not assent. Still less could hope, which springs from these. But that faith without hope or love could save them is manifestly impossible. With mere assent to Christian truth, and mere thinking it generally useful and valuable, is mingled no individual effect whatsoever. It has no mixture of love or hope, or joy, or peace; and the absence of one of these alone—the principle of love—would make it useless. If any man love not, however he may conceive he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he is anathema.

Let us not be misunderstood. We would not lessen in the least the value of the great principle of faith. We believe that the true faith of the penitent, if you have it (or if God hereafter grants it you), is that which puts on the robe of your Saviour's righteousness, which righteousness justifies you before God. We believe that when the prodigal's heart is seen to harbour the holy feelings of fear and love which make up godly sorrow, the Almighty approaches the hoping being, and assures him of his forgiveness. And we believe that that very assurance brings it him, and because he believes in Christ as a Saviour he is saved. We know of no other chain which could possibly exist between Christ and the sinner but that of faith; but it must be a faith preceded by repentance, or it is not a scriptural faith, and thus a chain which cannot be depended upon, indeed individually useless. We need not endeavour to arouse in you the principles of divine faith, as we did the principles of fear and love; for it is in the existence of these very principles that it differs from the human. *The difference is not a difference in the principle itself, but a difference in the antecedents and accompaniments* of the principle.

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The truly faithful in Christ have repented and believed, the impenitent have merely believed. The first is the only genuine believer. If there should hear us any sinner, who, as we discoursed of repentance and its groundwork, self-examination, thought we were passing over useless ground, and that which he never trod, and wished us to speak of faith alone without repentance, we tremble for his hope, for without repentance men cannot believe the gospel; whereas, if men really repent, He who cannot lie will certainly assure them of its glad tidings. Faith is indeed that through which as a channel justification is borne, but we know that that channel is dry, unless love have gone before and opened the fountain. We are sure that a barrier is imposed to the flowing into the human heart of the water of life, and that that barrier is sin. We do not deny that Christ's merits are always poured through this channel, but we affirm that until penitency have removed the obstruction—until it have begun to melt under the influence of love, not a drop will refresh the thirsty soul. Oh! if but one drop of the grace of a living faith could find its way through that mass of corruption, the impenitent heart, we should not fear for the consequences. We believe that this little drop, smaller than a grain of mustard-seed though it were, would sparkle more brightly than a brilliant, in that it would make the soul it entered meet for heavenly mansions. But not a drop can enter without the action of love, that great constituent of repentance. Even fear only hardens the barrier, and makes it more icy; it may prevent its increase, but it will not decrease it. But when love's flame has been excited in the sinner's breast, it has a mighty influence upon this channel of faith. Then this congealed and fastened barrier begins to move; the warmth of love thaws and loosens the mass of sin, and the golden drops of Divine grace, flowing from the

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great Sacrifice, come through Christ's appointed channel into the human soul. Then and then alone does the soul find by the channel of faith that which it wanted, and *repentance is the cause.* And thus the faith may be said to be different, for it is available and useful. Before it conveyed nothing but the fact that there was a Saviour who had redeemed the human race, and instituted a pure creed useful to the world, and now it conveys the precious truth that Christ has, in dying, conferred a special favour upon the soul itself, an exclusive privilege, of which all are not partakers. St. Augustine says of the truly faithful,—"He not only believes God, but believes in God;" and Luther says of him,—"He not only believes that Christ died that sins might be remitted, but believes that Christ died that his own sins might be blotted out." Never, then, rest satisfied with a mere idle belief; but look to it that you pass through repentance to faith. "Repent ye and believe the gospel."

Here, brethren, we might have done; but we cannot. We must notice another characteristic of living faith. It is characterized *not only by what goes before it, but what follows it.* When love's flame has loosened the barrier of sin in the channel of faith, the effects are still greater. It is not alone that the sin itself lessens and the water of life enters, carrying justifying grace; but in its efficacy it passes out into the world. Within is sanctification; without is beneficence. The thoughts in the interior are moistened from heaven; the words as they come forth breathe a different odour, and the actions are influenced by that which has come down from above. The heavenly fluid will not confine itself to the soul, but flow forth and impart blessing in all directions. We cannot enter into the fruits of faith, for with repentance and faith alone we are occupied; but this we must say, that as to the glory of God all his acts are destined to tend, the heavenly

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stream passing through this channel not only renders the soul it waters a subject of honour to Him who has renewed it, but it must (to carry out the simile) shoot aloft to its Author in jets of prayer and praise, and fall again in spray to bedew the hearts of the fatherless and widow, the poor and destitute, the afflicted and sorrowing.

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THE SOUL WATCHFUL.

"IN WATCHINGS OFTEN; IN FASTINGS OFTEN."
2 CORINTHIANS XI. 27.

IN our two last discourses *we dealt with diseased souls.* We endeavoured to show to wilful sinners the mode of cure. We, of course, took for granted that they had a passive belief in Christian truth, and on that supposition we tried to urge them to examination and repentance, if haply they might attain the rich gift of divine faith. And if this be attained, (and it has yet to be attained by every wilful sinner) it is a great thing. Its possessor has attained a mighty blessing—mighty, if viewed in but one aspect, a being saved from the wrath to come. Being in Christ Jesus he is without condemnation. The redeemed man becomes a saved man; he passes into a closer and more intimate relationship with his Redeemer. He is built into his spiritual house, adopted into his Father's family, united to his true flock. Or, to keep to the simile derived from bodily cures, which has run through our remarks, from an unsound he becomes a sound member of Christ's body, from belonging merely to the visible he passes into the invisible church of Christ.

But now, supposing one purpose accomplished, we have a different task before us. Contemplating the case of the real Christian, a sinner only through infirmity, we have to consider *some means of furthering the cure*, some duties *peculiar to this season* of growing in grace

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and going forward towards perfection. We have to deal with those whose spirit is willing though their flesh be weak. Now, religious ordinances, exercises, and duties come to be considered. To the wilful sinner the ordinance or observance may be of value, in so far as it may prevent the heart from growing harder, and its abandonment is, perhaps, adding another transgression to previous sin. But there are two sides to the question. Perhaps the heart may grow quite as hard from a formal attendance at Divine worship, and perhaps the sin of such worship may be as great as its abandonment. The matter, on these grounds, reduces itself merely to a choice between two evils. But there is one ground upon which we have always thought that even formal worship or religious exercise is better than none, and that is that its abandonment is an abandonment of the sphere of Divine grace and a cultivation of an evil habit. How shall a man examine himself, unless he be by some means instructed in the duty of self-examination and moved to it? How shall a man repent, unless by some means the terrors of the Lord and Christ's love be brought to bear upon him? And what difficulty in foregoing evil habits which have become second nature! And, besides, how seldom, if ever, does a man pass on from repentance to faith, without the use of at least one ordinance—prayer? But still it must be allowed that receiving the word with profit is only possible to the good ground. Prayers and praises can only be offered as acceptable sacrifices by the pure soul. Almsgiving can only come up for a memorial before God when it is done to God's glory. Communion of the body and blood of Christ can only be a communion of the faithful and penitent. Hence of every ordinance or observance, *except that to which every child is submitted*, it must be confessed that repentance and faith are necessary to

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its value or efficacy. In addressing adults, we must look to it that they repent and believe, before we can expect that they shall reap the benefit of those high duties and exercises enforced upon Christians, at this season especially. Let *watching* and *fasting* to-day occupy us, and let us commend them to the penitent and believing.

And, with regard to these duties, we would clearly say at the outset, that we consider them as *means to an end*, and in the attainment of that end alone does the goodness lie. In the awakening of the understanding to observe causes of spiritual danger, and in the punishment of the body to prevent these causes becoming effects, is nothing good or evil. It is in the result that follows, the success with which they are attended, that the virtue rests. But if they be means recommended, or, still more, enjoined in scripture, and practised by holy men, of whom we are to be followers where they are followers of Christ, they should be supposed useful and necessary. They are not, we conceive, duties of that character, that if a man omits them he necessarily and in the act must be pronounced a sinful man; but their importance to the Christian as aids to bringing spirit, soul and body, into that state of control and subservience which our religion requires, we conceive to be distinctly stated in Holy Scripture, to have been acknowledged by our church at all periods, and to be at the present time, perhaps, rather underrated. Let us see.

First, then, what says the holy volume upon the subject of *watching?*

Now, under the old dispensation, we find that the duty of watching was not neglected by the devout Psalmist, who tells us "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop:" that is to say, I turn my thoughts in upon myself and am solitary; I am separated from

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my companions and engaged in consideration: indeed, watching and divine meditation appear to have been the common employment of Old Testament saints. But we shall not delay amongst these, but pass on to the period of further enlightenment, and in the New Testament we find injunctions frequent to, as well as examples of, the exercise of watching. We are enjoined to watch by our Lord (a precept recorded by three Evangelists), because we know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man may come, and we find our Lord carrying out his own precept when his soul was sorrowful. He entreated his disciples to tarry and watch with Him, He upbraided Peter because he did not restrain his drowsiness to perform this duty, and then gave the general injunction, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Further, in the 13th of Mark, He describes Himself as a master of a household who left his servants watching behind him, and he commands them to watch, lest when He comes unto them they be found sleeping,—and what He said unto them He says unto all, "Watch." And when St. Paul made his parting oration to the assembled elders of Ephesus, because errors should arise after his departure, he bids these men "watch;" which referred not only to the doctrine but to their own selves. He tells the Corinthian Church to watch, and the Thessalonian to watch and be sober, and bids Timothy to "watch." The Ephesians he enjoins not only to pray but to watch thereunto with all perseverance. And St. Paul's meaning, in using this expression, "watch," is of course determined by his own practice; and he tells us in the text, that in watchings often, as well as fastings often, he spent his life. And in the Spirit's charge to the Church of Sardis, which had a name to live, but was dead, this community is exhorted to be watchful

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and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die, and for this reason, that its works were not found perfect before God. And in the 16th of Revelation he is described as blessed who watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.

From these passages it appears to us that there is clearly enjoined in Scripture, and practised by those intended to be our ensamples, a duty called by St. Paul "watching;" and that our Lord and his Apostles, as well as the saints of old, especially in times of sorrow and reflection (as this season) regarded it. Let us look further, then, into its nature and province.

Watchfulness strikes as *a kind of sequel* and conclusion *to self-examination.* As self-examination saw what the state of the soul was, so watchfulness guards against a recurrence of the evil. Self-examination looked into the heart and sought out what was amiss, and, by Divine aid, cast out the enemies of the soul which had nestled in its vitals. Watchfulness goes further, and sees where they have entered, and are looking to enter again, expecting their re-appearance. Self-examination has passed into the recesses of the heart, and looked these cherished foes to its eternal peace full in the face, and determined that, with the blessing of God, they should remain no longer, and, by aid sought from on high, has fought with them one by one, till every wilful sin has surrendered. Now, watchfulness sets itself to investigate the weak points whereby the gentle and insidious assaults were formerly made, which ended in permanent lodgments. For sins against God and our neighbour have not only found a traitorous heart within ready to receive them. There are *avenues along which these sins have been wont to pass:* this watchfulness learns. *The senses* are avenues. Enemies around have found *the eye* a ready key to the soul, and avarice and sensuality and other sins have through it passed into the heart. Watchfulness

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diverts the eye from objects which attract, and turns it to other and holier things. *The ear* has been an opening for lies and uncharitableness and irreverent language, and there they have been wont to pass in unheeded, until they have looked upon the road as their own. Watchfulness will shut the ear against the tale of slander, and will withdraw it hastily and in disgust from the thoughtless jest or base equivocation. *The taste* has been the way whereby gluttony and drunkenness and sensual appetites have found a channel to defile and destroy the soul, and watchfulness will restrict its exercise, and curb its propensity. *The touch* has assisted the other senses in every respect: hands and feet have gone together to gratify and carry out the evil they have borne to the heart, and the whole body has been impressed into the service. Watchfulness will look to it that the body be engaged in other pursuits, and have no time to devote to sinful purposes. Such, brethren, is the nature of watching; a duty at all times valuable, but at seasons of earnest heart-searching and reflection, such as Lent, especially incumbent. In vigilance and watching should this season be spent.

But if the nature of watching be guarding the avenues of sin, its province includes *sins of thought, word and action*. These you are to watch against; and this must necessarily be a varying province. As we said when speaking of self-examination, the disease of the soul varies in different individuals, and it continues to vary after a saving alteration as before. We need not remind you that the disease of the soul does not wholly depart under the influence of divine faith. It is, indeed, no longer an obstinate increasing disease. The character of the soul changes, *no wilful sin remaining. But still there is a disease, a disease of natural infirmity; and this varies.* Some are the creatures of one infirmity, some of another. In watching against sin, consequently, the Christian must

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have regard to that whereto he has been and is still, in another form, prone. Satan is your antagonist, and he not only knows the nature of watchfulness and the avenues of sin as well as you, but he knows the sins to force in through these openings. If you are prone to the indulgence of bad or foolish thoughts, or proud imaginations, or malicious feelings, Satan brings these forward and urges them in through the senses, or otherwise, if haply he may get the heart to consent to their reception and they may become wilful sins. Should anger and clamour, the remnant of an old spirit of contention, accompanied, perhaps, with profane language, still linger in your soul, Satan through the most likely openings endeavours to arouse you, and makes events profitable to that end, if perchance you may be undermined through the tongue. Should a habit of evil-speaking without meaning it remain, after an old habit of opening your mouth wide against every enemy, Satan fosters it. Should an old practice of lying be turned into a refined system of equivocation; through this the evil one would draw the soul back into its former state. Or, should some remnants of bad actions, such as dishonesty or irreverence, lurk behind, Satan fights with you to increase them; he knows they are there, and would allure you gradually to their willing development. Every Christian knows his own failings; none other can tell them so well. None but individuals can for themselves mark out the varying province of watchfulness. We believe that there are Christians, really good men, of all stages of growth in grace, and likewise of all grades in sins of infirmity. And thus the province of watchfulness is lessened or increased, as well as it differs, according to the besetting sins of the individual. Though the spirit be willing, the flesh of every son or daughter of Adam is more or less weak; and, lest they fall into temptation, they should "watch." A Christian should know

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all concerning his sins,—their source, the avenues along which they travel, and the reception they meet with within. His spiritual state should be a business, however sorrowful; an exercise, however distasteful. In watchings often should the Christian life be passed; watchings in season and out of season, watchings periodical and constant.

Watching employs, as a handmaid to effect its purposes as respects the flesh, the other duty of the text—*fasting.*

That fasting is suggested even by nature for the subjugation of body to mind seems to follow from its being in use throughout the gentile world. You remember the fast of the Ninevites in the book of Jonah. That public and private fastings were usual among the Jews we need scarcely remind you. All the Jewish nation fasted during their season which corresponded to our Lent. David "chastened his soul," and "sought the Lord" with fasting, and Ahab's fast was approved by God. Esther and Nehemiah and others fasted. This much would be sufficient to prove fasting to be suitable for its end, and approved of God for that purpose. But we do not conceive it would prove more. Unless fasting were found as a recognized duty of our pure and free dispensation this bodily exercise of Heathens and Jews would profit us nothing. But when we find our Saviour himself fasting, and joining it with the duties of almsgiving and prayer, and in his Sermon on the Mount giving directions concerning the proper performance of it, and excusing his disciples from fasting while He was upon the earth, but saying they should fast when that period of joy had expired, and when we find the Apostles accordingly stated in the Acts to have fasted, and telling us in the Epistles they had done so, though it be nowhere enjoined in so many words in the New Testament, *as in the case of infant-baptism,* we apprehend the candid Christian inquirer will rather attribute the *omission of*

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the direct *command to the well-understood nature of the duty*, than to such an exercise being valueless to the disciple of Christ.

But if it be a duty, the nature of the duty should be perfectly apprehended. It must be regarded as such solely in connection with its end. *Fasting is not a work* which, *like prayer or praise or almsgiving*, when springing from faith, can be called *good*. To abstain from food is not pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ. Fasting may be in itself an evil, and a choice may have to be made between the two evils of an injury to the body or an injury to the soul. The bringing the body into subjection to the renewed soul is the object of fasting, and, even though the body suffer, if the soul gain, a man is profited. But *the suffering of the body is itself an evil*, not a good, and thus fasting should never in itself be considered a good work. The end is the thing to be looked to and the value of the exercise therein consists. Consequently there is no absolute rule for its observance. If one man attain the end by a constant habit of temperance in all things, if another attain it by additional fastings on particular and important occasions, and if another be unable to attain it but by multiplying those occasions into weekly curbings of the flesh, the duty varies in the three cases with the requirement. And if, as in some exceptional cases which we have known, fasting does not at all benefit the soul, the exercise should be omitted.

But still we cannot but confess that if fasting be a duty at all, it must be *suitable to men*. Our Lord never said that his disciples should fast after his ascension, without contemplating its usefulness. If all men be composed of the same flesh and blood, howsoever altered they may be, the same seeds of corruption must remain. The flesh cannot but agitate and vex the renewed soul.

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Its sluggishness cannot but be a weight upon the spirit lifting itself up to its Creator, and its viciousness cannot but breathe many noxious exhalations. Hence, if godly men among us do not frequently fast, it arises from a want of experience of the value of this handmaid of watchfulness. We are sure that many, to whose soul's health fasting would have proved an invaluable blessing, have lived and died regarding it as an absurd and foolish exercise, which the Christian world in which they move wisely disregards.

Still we feel convinced that it is now as it was in St. Paul's times, and that he would have Christians generally to be followers of his practice in the text. In fastings often as well as in watchings often should the Christian life be still spent. The apostle felt that, though he would do good, evil was present with him. He felt that he had a law in his members which warred against the law of his mind, and brought him into subjection to the law of sin which was in his members. And who will deny that his own experience is the same? What Christian but will allow that *the flesh lusteth contrary to the spirit*, and the spirit to the flesh? Who feels not that the tendency of the body is to sully the renewed soul, for that its emotions and feelings and desires are sensual? Who feels not that the soul is acted upon by its earthly house, and that it feels its feelings and desires its desires? The soul is tried in itself, for with the spirit it still retains the seeds of disorder. Why, then, should Christians of the present day try the soul unnecessarily? Why, when they have to cope with an invisible enemy and a world whose temptations they cannot avoid, should they neglect to grapple with the only enemy of the soul they can touch? Why not, like St. Paul, by fastings often, endeavour to bring this foe of the spirit into subjection. Brethren, let us not be high-

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minded, but fear, and use every means to keep under the body, and in fastings often, if such prove suitable, let our time of pilgrimage be spent.

Nor is this the only reason. Who that in contemplative mood or devotional spirit would in his closet or the house of prayer soar aloft to his Creator and Redeemer, feels not the sluggishness of the flesh. The body, whose propensities in its present state are identified with that from which it sprung, drags down to earth the eager soul. The frame, which in the wild excitement of worldly pleasure feels no weariness, tires with but a little spiritual exercise. What *a valuable adjunct*, consequently, is fasting *to prayer!* It is mentioned often in scripture in this connection, and this is its greatest and most important office. Brethren, if you feel longings after Deity and spiritual knowledge, and would on your knees draw down from above wisdom better than fine gold, let prayer be accompanied with fastings often. If in a high and rapturous devotion, at this season of prayer, you would almost pass the boundaries of this present world, and in deep communion with God drink in draughts of divine love, be found in fastings often. If you would have joy and peace afforded you in supplication at the throne of grace,—if in spiritual vision you would have your mansion in the skies brought nearer to you, and witness the Holy Spirit's wings spread over you, and angels ministering unto you,—if nearer to your apprehension you would have brought Jesus dying for you and interceding for you, and awaiting your coming unto him,—if all the consoling individual verities belonging to the Christian traveller you would have opened to your view, and the eyes of your understanding so enlightened that you could walk in a state of implicit, unvarying, joyous faith and hope,—in fastings often, as well as in watchings often, let this season of Lent be passed.

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THE SOUL MEDITATING.

"My meditation of him shall be sweet."—Psalm civ. 34.

When we last addressed you, we considered *two duties* of the renewed soul, especially *appropriate to this season*. We shall to-day bring before you another, perhaps the highest duty and most exalted privilege of the Christian man.

The nature of *devout meditation* may be best learnt by contrast. When we endeavoured to mark out the duty of watching, if you remember, we compared it with self-examination. *From self-examination to watchfulness was an advance; so it is an advance from watchfulness to meditation.* Watchfulness brings with it security and peace to the soul, but meditation brings it grace. While watchfulness only looks to it that no impure thought, word, or action, leave its mark upon the tablet within, meditation draws down the inscriptions which the mint of heaven has struck. Watchfulness, general-like, sets its outposts, which observe the schemes and attacks of the foe; but meditation brings down a heavenly army to ward off the danger. Watchfulness is the more universal, because the absolutely necessary duty. Should the heart be overrun by the enemy, and sin reign in the soul, even if devout meditation were possible, its blessing could never enter or operate. But meditation is the higher duty, for while watchfulness only keeps out sin, meditation brings in divine knowledge and feelings. Watchfulness is purely negative, but meditation is nobly positive and real. Meditation is lofty, for it brings in armour which

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takes away the labour of watchfulness, and itself resists the devil and puts him to flight. It stores the soul with heavenly ideas and affections, which act as an impregnable fence, keeping it at once enlightened and holy and happy.

And let no man say that this is a vague and mystical and unintelligible duty. So far from this, it is a thoroughly scriptural and withal reasonable duty; and we believe there is far too little of its exercise amongst religious men. Worldly men of course we do not expect to meditate upon sacred subjects. To them such meditation would not be palatable, even if it were possible. But to those who care for their souls, we think this duty as *reasonable and scriptural*, especially at seasons like this, as the ordinary duties of all seasons,—prayer and praise and almsgiving. Let us occupy you a few moments with its importance; and, first, its reasonableness.

Now religious meditation upon Divine truths is *reasonable, because it makes them correctly known.* As you know, a man always meditates upon subjects with which he requires an accurate acquaintance. If a subject be allowed merely to pass through the mind, without resting there, if it be not stopped and held in suspension, and gazed upon; nay! if it be not laid up in the memory, and summoned occasionally for examination and contemplation, it will remain ever unknown. It may pass and repass, but its nature will be undetermined and unascertained. If the mind does not bring its powers to bear upon it and search it, it will be merely known to exist, or an imperfect idea of its character be gained. But, on the other hand, let it remain before the mind's eye, and be looked at and discerned, and it shapes itself into something distinct; the dim and fleeting image assumes a form and parts; its outlines and inlines, what

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should be included in it, and what should be excluded from it, is seen. And when the mind dismisses it into its repository, the memory, the distinct impression is still retained, and the limits and confines, as well as the several parts of the object, are treasured up. And when the understanding again recalls it to meditate upon it, it finds the advantage of the previous meditation and the next recall of the two former, and so progressively, things deep becoming gradually fathomable, things indistinct plain, till the whole subject unfolds itself and becomes a known thing, an understood fact. But meditation cannot cease even here. If the subject require to be retained, periodical meditations must still be exercised upon it. Otherwise the memory, however retentive, will fail to hold the complete subject; its outlines and separate parts will begin to assume the old hazy form; the light which meditation threw upon it will be found to lessen, till the subject partly, perhaps wholly, will become again invisible. Such is the importance of meditation to the knowledge of any truth. But this argument applies with two-fold force to religious truths. In them the lines are especially delicate, and the subjects are in themselves so lofty and grand, that to some there are no outlines. If any distinct and correct impression, consequently, of a religious truth, is to be gained or retained, such knowledge must, in reason, be had by devout and regular meditation.

But *in matters of religion*, meditation is *of unusual value*, because *it makes the truths it deals with be felt*. Religion is not addressed so much to the understanding as to the heart, and its truths appeal more to the latter than the former. There is no religious truth which has not in it more or less of a moral nature to be loved as good, or hated as evil, and thus meditation makes it not only be understood as a truth, but a truth which should influence the feelings. Men learn to love more and more,

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or hate more and more, through this pious exercise. The sweetness or foulness, the loveliness or hideousness, would have been discerned but feebly at least without meditation, but this reveals them. When the truth is not only seen, but seen as a thing to be rejoiced over or mourned over, desired or loathed, hoped for or feared, sought or shunned, it causes a movement of the man towards it heartily, or from it cautiously, and the thing to be loved becomes a darling object of the mind, a fond idea, an idea which the soul sees to be beautiful, having observed its desirableness, while the hateful thing becomes an object to be dreaded, and which the mind entertains only for the purpose of learning its despicable nature and injurious effect.

But religious meditation is not only reasonable; it is *scriptural*. For proof of this, under the most ancient dispensation, we might bring before you the case of a patriarch who was wont to meditate in the fields at eventide; under the Jewish, of the people of God enjoined to meditate upon the book of the law day and night; and under the Christian, of Timothy admonished, for the sake of a true understanding of what St. Paul wrote him, to "meditate upon these things." But what Scriptural evidence does any Christian want, with the example before him of the man after God's own heart! What are all the Psalms but holy breathings, arising from profundity of meditation? And in these does he not tell us that the righteous man meditates in God's law day and night; that he himself meditated upon God "in the night watches," and that these meditations embraced God's "precepts," God's "statutes," God's "word," indeed "all God's works." And you perceive the effect of this meditation upon his feelings as well as his understanding, where he says, as in the text, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

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Now to guide you into this habit of devout meditation, which is so reasonable and scriptural, let us to-day lead your minds through *one meditation.* And what shall we select but that which is *the centre of all,* in relation to which all others must be considered, and from which they all flow? Let us to-day meditate upon *the attributes and dealings of God, and see in what way they can be said to be sweet. The sweetness of meditation upon God* shall be our subject of meditation. And as this sweetness of our meditation upon God can be best learned by contrast, let us first meditate as though we were unenlightened *heathen men,* then as though we were *sinful* men, and, lastly, as *godly* men. Thus we shall see wherein consists the sweetness of Christian meditation upon God. And when we conclude this one meditation, we shall all, perhaps, leave this house of God with a more exalted notion of the value of this Christian duty.

First, then, let us suppose ourselves divested of all the advantages with which we are surrounded,—the Christian religion and our Bible and our Church,—and become contemplators of Deity. Let us merely *as men,* and not as Christians, raise our thoughts up to the Author of our being. Let our thoughts in this relation roam away to the Creator of all things, and from the sameness of the plan of the universe, the connected system we survey, we are led to *the unity of God.* We see in the productions of the earth as well as its constituents; we see in animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, an uniformity, and clear tending to one end, which shows us that there is only one God. And this Great Being as men we can meditate upon with great pleasure, though mingled with wonder, and our contemplation of God is in this respect sweet. Then let our thoughts run through time and consider that this Great Being must have lived before his works, and as He is one and cannot have been

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created by any other, He must have lived from a period beyond which there was none, and as we vainly follow that period and find ourselves always travelling, *the eternity of God* strikes us. And though astonishing grandeur is mingled with the feeling of pleasure, yet the very unapproachableness of the idea of eternity is a source of delight to the imagination, and our meditation upon God is still sweet. Let our thoughts now settle upon the immensity of the works of Deity, passing by stages from the atom to the universe, from the drop to the ocean, from the mote in the sunbeam, the particle invisible from its inconceivable smallness, to the universe of worlds invisible from their inconceivable distance; and above all, we are impressed, nay, confounded, with *the power*, the all-mightiness *of God*. And still there is nothing which need prevent us joining in mental hymns of praise, and our meditation being in the strictest sense sweet. Let us still reflect, and let our thoughts turn to the fact, that the works we see cannot keep themselves in motion and progress, and that God must be everywhere present to uphold them, and that thus He cannot be a substance, but a Spirit, and an universal spirit. And thus the wonderful notion of *God's omnipresence*, of God's being beside us as we reflect, and beside every other congregation and individual man; of his being with us as we rise up and lie down, go in and go out, and yet with every one else, the idea of his upholding the motion of a world which moves silently through space, and yet supporting the life of every living thing that creeps or flies, or swims, or walks, astonishes and overpowers us. But the meditation is most sweet. It is comforting and satisfying, that our life should be in such mighty hands, lest evil befal us, and we die. The notion of God being a Spirit, if we proceed with the contemplation, leads to His *unchangeableness*. And this is a source of satisfac-

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tion, for if there were to be changes in God, what He has made He might any day unmake, the world might be blotted out from the map of the heavens, and we with it. God's omnipresence leads to *His omniscience*, for it carries with it the idea of his knowing all present things; and we may glean it from the wonderful skill displayed in things around us, and their answering always their purpose, which proves that the Deity knew how future things would eventuate. But *still there is nothing to cause uneasiness*, but, on the contrary, pleasure, for our own construction in body and soul would be more likely to be excellent, coming from the hand of an Omniscient Artificer. All this meditation upon God can be exercised by us, though we never saw a Bible or were instructed in the blessings of redemption, and yet, though our own self-preservation and happiness, the first law of nature, were connected with our contemplations as it must be, we could still say, one and all, of such a subject of thought, " My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

But there are some attributes of God which we have yet not meditated upon, and which provoke other feelings in our minds, contemplating merely as men. *We must not forget* to contemplate *the justice and goodness of God.* Let our thoughts turn to these attributes, and as they pass through creation, we witness the justice and goodness of God in the adaptation of the earth to the circumstances of its inhabitants, in the growing corn, the green grass, and the cattle for our use, the materials of food and clothing, and the beauty and loveliness of nature around us. But our observation is only superficial and meagre if it stop here. We cannot but pass on and enquire, *where is God's goodness* to be found *in the sin and sorrow and suffering which overspreads the earth,* overwhelming some and depressing the many? Where

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is God's justice to be found in the wicked often flourishing like bay-trees, while the righteous are despised, and often barely rescued from poverty and rags? What is the meaning of a good God's permission of evil? Why does He not sweep it all away and make his creatures happy? These thoughts cannot but enter our minds, contemplating merely as men the justice and goodness of God. And how can our meditations upon God continue to be sweet? But *still more, looking beyond this present world,* as men we know that there is a law written in our hearts, and can we say that conscience excuses us? How, without our Bible, can we consider God to be just and good in bringing us into the world in sorrow, in causing us to pass through a scene of suffering and sin, and to pass out burdened with a multitude of transgressions. We can see but little pleasure in this contemplation. No! when we consider all the other attributes of God, though we be heathen men, our meditation may be apparently "sweet." But when we come, without further information, to contemplate God's justice and goodness, we are at once dissatisfied and perplexed; then comes a cloud over meditation upon God, which affects not these attributes alone, but passes back to every other. We find it a simple matter of fact that in the world, amongst much good is mixed more evil; amongst much happiness, more misery; amongst much pleasure, more pain. As unassisted contemplators of Deity, it is impossible for us to say that, in these respects, the Judge of all the earth has done right, much less acted with benevolence. Evil is a thing which runs rampant amongst us,—which the very ground shows,—which our bodies feel, and our souls share. And if, as is the truth, from the very depth of our being comes a voice, saying that with the wicked soul God is not well pleased, and it will yet suffer, with no knowledge of a remedy for the evil, our meditation upon

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God cannot possibly be pleasing. This one fact before us of *evil permitted* from no known cause, *and no remedy* to be found, is a grievance which must make harsh and unpleasant to unenlightened men the whole divine character. From this one cause there is no attribute satisfactory to contemplate. In the eternity of God what is there but probably eternal punishment? In the power of God what but a power to be feared? In the omnipresence of God what but a truth to shrink from? In the omniscience of God what but a fatal knowledge for sinners? In the unchangeableness of God what but a kind of presumption that men shall continue for ever as they are, unholy and unhappy? And hence, as you see, the last thing perhaps desirable for us, without any knowledge of redemption, the thing most unsatisfactory for us, without any Bible or knowledge of God as revealed, would be meditation upon his character; for, to unassisted man, it is not sweet.

But if unassisted and unenlightened men cannot find it sweet to meditate upon God, what must be the meditation of *enlightened but wicked men?* A heathen contemplator sees round him sin and sorrow and suffering, and finds no pleasure if he meditate truly in dwelling upon the character of one who permits such gross evils in which he is himself included; but, seeing no solution or means of rescue, he probably concludes there is none, and that the best he can do is to observe to the utmost the law written in his heart, if haply it may excuse him. But more generally, we grieve to say, preserving some gleams of truth from the most ancient times, he developes them, and distorts them into a system of sacrifice, and invents deities, and gives them a history to suit the difficulty—and thus his meditation upon God is endowed with a false and ruinous pleasure. But he for whose advantage Christ has brought life and im-

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mortality to light through the Gospel, he who sees God just and still the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, he who knows of the fall and sees that God is not the author of evil, but for that evil has provided a remedy, and in meditation upon God has nothing but the awful contemplation that he is rejecting that way; what, think you, would be your thoughts in such a position meditating upon God? *God's greatness* in his eternity and omnipresence *spurned*, *God's power set at nought*, God's *unchangeableness* in hating sin *disregarded*, God's *omniscience* and infinite wisdom in searching the thoughts and intents of the heart *slighted*, and God's *goodness* to you made plain, and still his *justice* to your eye kept clear, both *despised*, such would be your only legitimate contemplation. If the follower of nature's uncomfortable creed have little ground for sweet meditation upon God, the enlightened wicked has less. To him an arm has been extended, and he has refused; for him Christ has died, and he has spurned his cross; to him the Holy Spirit's assistance has been vouchsafed, and he has resisted. And hence meditation upon God with the wicked man is the bitterest of all cups he has to drink: there is gall and wormwood in the draught, and hence he consults his happiness when he drives the idea of God far from him and God is not in all his thoughts.

We have thus meditated upon God as unenlightened and wicked men, and found therein their contemplations of Deity cannot be sweet. And *if in these two meditations you have gone with us and seen how they could not be sweet*, if you have seen what was wanting to make these contemplations satisfactory, it will be easy to lead you finally to see *how your meditation*, as real Christians, *may be sweet*. Let us continue to meditate, holding in view our previous contemplations.

Now we have seen that the difficulty to the unenlight-

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ened contemplator in meditating upon God was the apparent violation of justice and goodness which he sees in his works. In that position you would be unable to account for the existence of sin and sorrow and suffering. And you could not see how, brought into the world with an evil nature, you could be expected to keep the Divine law. And you would see, as a matter of fact, you could not keep it, and thus you could not meditate upon God's attributes with pleasure. But Christians, not in name only, but in reality, is not your meditation even in this respect sweet? Can you not look upon yourselves as creatures of God with as great satisfaction as though you were made and continued innocent? Is not God's justice to you as great as if you were made in his moral image? Observe what you know concerning his attributes. You know as Christians that *God* originally *created man pure*, with power to overcome temptation.—You know that *he fell*.—You know that *it would have required a special interference* of God in favour of Adam's offspring *to sweep away sin* at once, and thus prevent his descendants falling with him and sharing his corruption.—You know that *this would be scarcely just*, at least not most just. *Thus in the original corruption you have the key* to all the miseries which earth and its inhabitants feel; to the briar and the thorn; the evil within you and without you; the diseases to which you are subject, and the death through which you must pass. You have God's justice shown you in originally creating man pure, and you have his justice still further and more rigidly shown you in not raising man up again directly to the position he forfeited through sin. Now unenlightened men do not perceive these things. Though some of them, with the utmost research of which human faculties were capable, probed the universe, they never did nor could find out this truth. But you find it in God's holy book. The

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carnal man does not find it therein, and thus is in the same position, or worse, than the heathen, as a contemplator of God. Its mere enunciation will not satisfy him, because the grievousness of human transgression is unknown to him. He cannot see that in the justice of God so small an offence as Adam's merits such a great doom, and thus the disclosure of the fall and its consequences does not satisfy him. In truth, if a man, as a philosophical enquirer, comes even with scriptural knowledge to meditation upon God's justice in connexion with our race, he will leave the contemplation unsatisfied; for to the natural and carnal mind it is not susceptible of demonstration that justice should, from Adam's transgression, trifling to the unspiritual eye, pour forth evil upon millions of the human family. But you, enlightened in head and heart, have this want supplied, and thus your meditation upon God can be sweet. You know of the fall, and you know of the enormity of human transgression. You know not merely the facts, but, by a more than human calculation, you have learned the enormity of the single transgression in Eden. You know the effects of one wilful sin, and its universally defiling process. And thus you can look with serenity, though with sorrow, upon all the evil around you; viewing it as the inevitable consequence of original sin. Christian meditators, with the truth of God in your heads and hearts, you, and you alone, have the key by which to unlock the secret of God's dealings with men; and regarding every attribute of God, even his justice, with all the fervour of which the devout soul is capable, you can say, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."

And it is the same with respect to *God's goodness.* The unenlightened and carnal meditators of God's goodness ask, "Supposing that evil permitted did not im-

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pugn the justice of God, supposing that He were just in allowing affliction here, and suffering its consequence hereafter, what can be said of his goodness?" "Is it good in the Divine Being to permit that man should perish eternally for his forefather's sin, even granting that it were just?" And they answer, confidently, "No;" and thus their meditations of God are not sweet. But *you know of a way by which mercy and truth may meet together;* you know of a way by which righteousness and peace may kiss each other; you know of One who paid the penalty of every human sin, and through Him your meditation upon God's goodness may be sweet. You can think of God as a Being whose justice and holiness requires nothing which through Christ you cannot obtain. You can think of God, as One whose justice has been perfectly satisfied in your case, and who cannot, who has bound himself by a covenant, not to condemn those who have an interest in Christ. While the unenlightened know nothing of this fact, and the wicked know it only as a fact not valuable to them, and thus their meditations are unhappy; your meditation upon God is wholly satisfied by this great truth. This is, indeed, in meditation upon God, your alpha and omega, your beginning and end. This not only suits the perfect goodness of God, but his holiness and justice, and knits them all together. This is the supplement to your knowledge of the fall, and makes every attribute of God lovely to think upon. Through this truth, *you need not fear God's holiness*, for you have boldness to enter into the holiest, through the blood of Christ. You need not, through this truth, fear *God's justice;* for God can be just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. *Over other attributes it sheds a charming lustre.* The Eternity of God in Christ is an eternity of dwelling with the Lamb for

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ever and ever. The *Power* of God, in Christ, is a power exerted in producing for you delight, such as your eyes never saw, your ears heard, or your minds conceived. The *Omnipresence* and *Omniscience* of God in Christ are the presence and sunshine of the countenance of the greatest and grandest of beings through endless ages. The *Unchangeableness* of God in Christ is the earnest which you have that what has been promised shall surely come to pass. All is the effect of God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them. With this glass all is made clear; with this truth, and this alone, in the field of view, can God be seen by you as a lovely object, and whatever attribute you contemplate, there still remain the unvarying certainty that your meditation of Him shall be sweet.

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THE SOUL SATISFIED.

"FOR HE SATISFIETH THE LONGING SOUL."—PSALM CVII. 7.

THE soul's *examination*, *penitence*, *watchfulness*, and devout *meditation*, have this Lent successively occupied us. To-day we would consider the means of its complete and permanent *satisfaction*.

An observer of human affairs would be very likely to conclude, from the endless pursuit of worldly advantages and blessings by the majority of mankind, that they were perfectly satisfied with the things of earth. Judging from their outward actions of their inward feelings, he might conclude not only that human aspirations could be bounded by passing things, but in point of fact were actually so bounded. Nor would we be disposed to deny him in some cases his conclusion. Many individuals may have so altered their natures from constant habit of reposing all their hopes upon the things of time, that for a period an ulterior longing, *a longing after the eternal and divine, peculiar to man*, and one of the greatest proofs of his immortality, has been caused to cease. We should have closely shut our eyes to many instances daily presented to us, if we did not consider such cases possible, nay common. If men appear around us whose countenances in the world and at home wear the look of unceasing happiness, while their every occupation is purely temporal; if individuals are to be seen whose whole soul seems immersed in every-day pursuits, with evident pleasure to themselves, and no thought beyond; it would be idle to assert that the longing heart, the soul eager to realize happiness not of earth, unseen and eternal, had an universal influence. But without a

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all giving up the undoubted truth, that in every immortal spirit there is a longing for something above and beyond earth—a heaven-born feeling, an impulse of celestial tendency, implanted by Him who made man in his image, we can admit this numerous class of exceptions, or, if it be so, this rule. We see in this *no proof that the longing* of which we speak was *not* originally *implanted* in these never-dying souls. *Neither* do we see in it any evidence *that this longing has been quenched.* We account for these numerous cases upon the principle that the longing may be exercised upon objects short of the true one; that by force of habit it may be successfully diverted into a false channel. But we know and are sure that from this channel it will eventually burst as from that which cannot contain it, and be without an object, and thus again unsatisfied. We assert that the longing of every human soul after what is eternal and divine, though for a time unfelt, through being identified with worldly things, will yet leave them, and prove that nothing earthly could satisfy it. We say that fleeting things will never *permanently* satisfy the craving of that soul whose destiny is to eternally live. We care not that the soul, in order to glut this craving, go forward adding house to house and field to field, and that the longing for eternity and durability appear to have found a continual satisfaction. We wait till the storms and troubles of life blow upon the head of the pursuer of wealth or rank; and, still more, till disease in its lightest forms appear in the distance, settle down in his neighbourhood, or afflict him personally, and we know the soul will lose the perishable object, and begin to long for something constant and lasting. The longing will then begin to disengage itself from unnatural objects never intended or fitted to satisfy it, and soar abroad in anxiety to look for something really suited to it. We call experience to our aid to attest what we say touching the longing heart. We bid you consult

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the most favoured of the human species; seek him to whose lot has fallen, as the reward of his enterprise, exertion, or good fortune, the mightiest worldly blessings, and he will tell you that these things have never permanently satisfied him; that he has been aching for something beyond, that his soul still longed, still thirsted.

Claiming, then, for all mankind this longing soul as a *fact*, we do not care to enter into its *cause*. We are not anxious to pass into the spiritual and immortal nature of the soul, which forbids its contentment with passing things, for thus we should have to pass into the domain of metaphysics. We prefer to draw your attention briefly to the throes and *efforts for satisfaction* of the longing soul, *ordinarily witnessed*, and then lead you to the *true satisfaction* of the immortal being.

Now it must be confessed that, with the great majority of men, the longing mentioned in the text is a mere indefinite feeling, with little object or aim. There is a craving, but for what the individual himself is unable to say. When it endeavours to vent itself in words, it finds a difficulty; and, as it meets with little sympathy in the world, where it is called discontent, though observable at times in the expression of the features and the manner of the individual, it does not attempt to describe itself. There is, however, allowed to be a dissatisfaction in general with the things of the world. It is confessed by men whom we can draw out to speak upon the subject, that they fail to bestow real comfort; that they want constancy, and in themselves can give no peace or happiness such as the soul hankers after. They tell us that an object of this kind has yet to be found. And the consequence is that we observe them, considering that happiness must be somewhere within their reach, trying every expedient hitherto untried to satisfy the craving of the soul. Sometimes men try to quench the longing by continued immersion in stirring scenes of life

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and business; sometimes to while it away in distant places; sometimes to satisfy it by the beauties of nature; sometimes to drown it in the fumes of wine, and most frequently to glut it by continued excitement, by the noise and glitter, the whirl and fashion, of human society. But still it continues, nay, rather grows worse. For in the intervals of necessary repose this longing attacks the soul exhausted by things which satisfy not, with an increased power, and it craves more insatiate than before. Hence it is that this longing of the soul is found to be strongest in those to whose lot has fallen, and who have used in turn, every worldly means of gratifying it. Frequently the longing soul which has run the round of all human pleasure, and still remains unsatisfied, becomes perplexed, and begins to believe that the fault is to be found in its own constitution. That those things which the world generally looks upon as the elements of happiness fail to satisfy it alone, while people around, in, perhaps, less favoured circumstances, are perfectly happy, it esteems strange and unaccountable. This is the most discomforting result of the longing of the soul; and, yet, what a delusion! Ah! if such a soul could pierce the secrets of other bosoms, it would see that those whom it meets every day with happy faces in the walks of society, each feeling the necessity of supporting his own independence, and keeping from the world, if he can, what passes within him, are possessed by much the same feeling. The heart, indeed, knoweth its own bitterness, and none can tell its grievances but itself. Man, even in the midst of crowds—nay, in his own household—is an individual being, and none accurately knows him but himself (sometimes not even himself) and his God. But we take it upon ourselves to assure every longing soul that it is not peculiar, for that its own craving is the general craving of immortal spirits which have not found

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the true object of their repose. But still this isolating oneself, and considering oneself peculiar and different from others, is a common effect of the longing of the soul. And thus it appears that around us the longing soul assumes at least three aspects. We have *the great majority craving for happiness*, confessing they have not found it, *and pressing forward after sources of it as yet untried;* we have *a large number who have tried every earthly fountain* of happiness, *and have come to the conclusion that happiness* real and steady *cannot be had*, equivalent to saying that man's lot is beneath that of the beast that perishes. And we have *not a few who believe themselves afflicted with a miserable* and disconsolate *disposition*, and that, though there is much happiness in the world, it is destined not to be theirs. And here, though there be a mixed multitude, all in common are the subjects of the longing of the text, of a craving, however indefinite, for a happy condition which they do not possess, and which it is clear the world cannot give. *As we have said all are not conscious of being in this state*, or by a process of thought have arrived at this conclusion. Many are ignorant of their own character, and many are not in the habit of coming to conclusions. They neither like the trouble of arriving at conclusions, nor themselves when arrived at. We speak merely of the feelings they entertain and are influenced by, whether they know it or not, or reflect upon it or not. If the craving never caused an idea in their minds, or forced a sentence from their mouths, yet judging from their habits and manners, we perceive the longing of their souls. Though it may be unrecognized or misunderstood, it is there. Though they know not the nature of that which drives them from thing to thing to satisfy it, yet they do try expedient after expedient for the purpose. We view their movements and acts,

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their convulsive efforts, their continuous struggles, their paroxysms of speculation, their inventions of vanities, their pursuit of power and rank and wealth, as the human soul opening wide its mouth, and demanding to be temporarily, if not permanently, filled. All is at least an unconscious gaping which imperatively and unceasingly requires to be satisfied, but can never say, and says less and less with time, that it has ever met with true satisfaction.

Now our text would have us contemplate man as a creature looking *to God for satisfaction.* "He satisfieth the longing soul." From the many sorrows of the world *God has for the longing soul a way of escape.* The soul passing through its present existence is taught to look upon it as a pilgrimage rather than a home—as a "vale of tears" rather than a place of rejoicing. It is taught to look on and beyond this present existence to a future scene. It is taught that to the eye of faith there is a way by which even in this world its longing is satisfied. It is shown that that way has been trodden by One who came down from above and laboured in its construction,—that by faith men might walk through it to the land of rest. There lies the way for men to dwell upon and walk in, bedewed with his sorrows, his humiliation, his agony, from the chamber of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary. There lies the way, cut through the prejudices of unbelieving Jew and idolatrous Gentile. There lies the way, faintly mapped out in Old Testament sacrifices, and its thread even traceable in the facts of Jewish history. There lies the way, of which the Psalmist sung, and the prophets majestically and mysteriously spake. There lies the way, for the longing soul to pass through, hewn out by the despised and rejected of men the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. There lies the way, wherein trouble can all be cast upon One who was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our

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iniquities, upon whom was the chastisement of our peace, and by whose stripes we are healed. This is the way for souls anxious for repose in a world of dissatisfaction, and God first of all satisfieth the longing soul by a knowledge of that way. When torn with troubles, and vexed with things which satisfy not, it turns to that way, and contemplates its desirableness, and resolves to walk therein (mysterious and incomprehensible though the truth be), it is filled. It can bear every disaster and misfortune in full view and enlightened understanding of that way. And the more the soul dwells upon that way, and treads in his footsteps who formed it, the more it is satisfied. As the soul contemplates the goodness of God who sent down a Saviour to construct the way of escape, and the inconceivable graciousness of Him who, though in the form of God and equal with Him, took upon Him the form of servant to labour in its construction, the character of the way opens itself. And as the soul treads the way of life it draws contrasts between the happiness of its present and former ways; it sees that the road to heaven is the way of comfort as well as life, whereas other roads lead to sorrow as well as death, and it becomes gradually filled with its loveliness. By meditating upon it, and passing through it, its minute excellencies become discerned; it is seen in all its bearings and windings, in its relation to God and man, to body and soul, to human history, past present and future, till satisfaction ripens into ecstacy. To feast upon this, the longing, craving, immortal spirit turns, when discontented with the things of time, and it feels that there is something suited to it, something akin to its character and requirements in this heavenly way, and thus, *with Christ Jesus as a way of entrance into* the holiest, as the gate of eternal glory, as a road by which the soul may pass to *other and different scenes*, God "satisfieth the longing soul."

But the satisfaction of the soul is not limited by God to

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a knowledge of the way of escape from this scene of discontent. Its view is guided through it to *the goal in which it ends*, and a scene of loveliness unfading, the glories of which it can rapturously admire but faintly pourtray, expands itself before its eager eye. Here is everything of which it was in quest. It is true that the picture drawn before it by the pencil of the soul's Comforter, for some wise purpose, does not take in all its beauties, but rather dimly shadows forth its splendour. It is true that there is ample room for the speculative mind (if on such a subject the soarings of the imagination be lawful,) to conjecture the residence, the employments, and enjoyments of the saved. But *the most earnestly longing soul finds sufficient* in the Divine record *to satisfy its cravings*. It wants a home unembittered by the sorrows of earth, and there all tears shall be wiped away from every eye. It wants a home unchanging, and it is told that this residence is eternal in the heavens, and that the righteous shall live and reign with Christ for ever and ever. It wants joy and happiness, and it is told that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him. It yearns for primeval purity and innocence, an abode of simplicity, unlike the intricate web which an evil world furnishes, and the clearest characteristic of heaven is that there shall in no wise enter there anything that defileth or maketh a lie. Oft does the longing soul on the troublous sea of life desire peace, and Christ consoles the well-known craving by the assurance that as in the world it has tribulation, in Him it shall have peace. What remains but to say that the description contained in the Apocalyptic vision of the New Jerusalem includes everything which human eye, mind, or ear could crave. The paradise of our first parents, and allotted purity as its

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residence, has oft elicited the attention and awakened the imagination of the reader. Its spreading trees and fruits, in comparison of which the most luxuriant growths of earth, embarrened by a withering curse, can be but failures,—its fields enriched with grass of a greenness now forgotten, and flowers spontaneous, which human culture can never imitate,—its whispering breezes instinct with life, and its rivers' glassy surface,—its sky unequalled by the fairest oriental scene, across which no passing cloud ever sped its transitory way, but sweetest mists dissolved themselves in dew, whose golden drops greeted the rising sun: these characteristics of primeval paradise have tuned the harps of East and West, and yet we doubt not that human imagination in its loftiest flights of poetry and painting have failed to embody God's original, or realize this garden. But the home prepared for the creature apart from the Creator fades into utter insignificance in rivalry with that prepared for him who is to be in the immediate presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The beauty, the quiet, calm, serene loveliness of nature's most charming scene, loses all its excellency when the transcendent sublimity of the everlasting hills which support the abode of Deity, and are the footstool of his throne, burst upon the vision. The paradise of heaven wholly eclipses the paradise of earth. The soul might, indeed, amid all the sweetness of earth's most enchanting prospects, tire eventually of the sameness, (this you may have experienced) and relapse into a dreamy lassitude, the forerunner of pain. But in heavenly places not only will an inexhaustible gorgeousness and variety meet the eye, and the ear drink in sounds not allotted to flesh and blood, but, if the 13th of 1st Corinthians have any meaning, the liberated and enlarged mind of man will be enabled to grasp things unknown to it on earth, and search out and explore the hidden things of God. Mysteries un-

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ravelled, and secrets impervious to human eye, will expand themselves to its enlightened gaze. The plan of the universe, which revolves round the throne of God, will pour forth its wonders before the mind's eye, to enlist its admiration; and the world of minds, angelic and human, the offspring of that Parent Mind, the origin of all, will employ its energies. Thus the longing soul, looking through the way to heaven, sees a place rich in everything it has ever thought of or conceived; aye! which is as far beyond anything it has ever conceived as the most distant luminary, scarce discernible in the firmament above, is from the earth upon which it dwells. With this prospect God satisfieth the longing soul. Here it has everything soul ever required or imagined. *This scene* of holiness, purity and splendour, brightness and knowledge, unchangeable as its Maker, *becomes the idea of the distressed longing soul* and fills it. When trials and sorrows, disease and death, torture it, this is its idea. As form or landscape is the idea of the artist, or freedom of the patriot, so this much grander and more enduring conception is the idea of the immortal spirit. And this idea becomes clearer with time, as it continues to walk with God. The more steadfastly the way to heaven is viewed and followed, the more plainly does its termination stand out to the soul's view, and the more and more satisfied it becomes. The more the soul regards this as its home, the more it is weaned from the things of earth. And oh! how beauteous, but how seldom seen, (yet we have sometimes witnessed it), when the longing soul, satisfied with this object, is distressed with no sorrows, and elevated with no joys of time; when in one smooth, calm, heavenly tenor, it holds its course unvarying, with its eye ever fixed on the celestial country, when it seems as though it heard the soft breezes which pass through the land of Zion, and the strains which roll

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through her palaces, when it looks as though it saw the smiles which played upon angelic faces at its progress, and had itself caught from the mansions of bliss a heavenly ray which shone upon its every thought, illuminated its every action, and was reflected from its every word. What a bright living comment is such an instance upon the words, "He satisfieth the longing soul!"

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THE SOUL ARMED.

"WHEREFORE TAKE UNTO YOU THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND IN THE EVIL DAY, AND HAVING DONE ALL TO STAND."—EPHESIANS VI. 13.

ST. PAUL, having set the main truths and blessings of the Christian religion before the Ephesian Church, and having built thereon a goodly number of practical exhortations, is drawing to a close when he speaks these words. "Finally," he says,—*i. e.*, to wind up the epistle—I command you "to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." And to this end put on the whole armour of God, that you may "be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." For I would have you remember that we wrestle not merely against "flesh and blood," the world itself, but against "the rulers of" its "darkness," against "principalities and powers" of evil, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore,—*i. e.*, seeing this to be the case—seeing that all the powers of the air are confederate against you, seeing that evil angels are leagued with evil men, and sit enthroned around you, again I exhort you "to take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand" these enemies in "the evil day" of trial and temptation, and "having done all," used every means at your disposal, to hold your ground firm and unshaken.

Let us finally endeavour this Lent to follow in the footsteps of the inspired Apostle, and, relying upon the aid of the Divine Spirit try to persuade you to put on

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the armour which the text and chapter contain and describe.

First of all, brethren, stand, having your loins girt about with *the truth of God.* Let there be a firm persuasion of all contained in the gospel of Christ, which gospel is God's truth. Thus you will be able to withstand in the evil day of doubt and uncertainty, and, having received all, to stand. Such an evil day dawns, some time or other, upon every Christian man. And at such a time if the coat of mail have given way in the least, if even a link have been taken from you, you know not that one day the whole may not be lost to you. If you give up any part of the truth, if you abandon the whole and entire counsel of God, the subtle enemy may gradually, by insidious and almost imperceptible advances, rob you of it all. So connected together is the truth, that if you open any even of its details you have opened the whole; you have given an entrance to doubt, and you will find it gradually pass on from step to step, till, pressed and backed by evil influences, none can tell its end. The coat of mail (of which the Church of God is the witness and keeper), branching off in every direction from it first link, Christ Jesus, is connected and uniform. Take away any one link, and you destroy its wholeness and symmetry, and with these its strength. And there is no active inquiring Christian soul which is not liable to this loss. Every such soul is prone to alter, diminish, or fashion to its own fancy the truth of God. Brethren, by every such act a source of defence has been lost to you. No link, however small, of that coat of mail which you have been left as an heritage, to cover your loins in the day of battle, is of little value. Stand girt about with the whole truth of God. Refuse to give in or alter any point which God's holy word distinctly, though even faintly contains, influenced by your own fancy

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or others' opinions. Resolve never to let the truth leave you; the truth which Christ died to establish and rose to exalt; the truth which the Apostles preached and wrote and suffered for; the truth for which the noble army of martyrs shed their blood; the truth which the goodly fellowship of Prophets of old sung in mystery and type, and which the Church throughout all the world acknowledges now, which militant she contends for—which triumphant she praises. Stand, having your loins girt about with the truth of God.

But as you should have your loins girt about with truth, so you should have on *the breastplate of righteousness*. As the devil assaults the spirit which holds not the truth, so he assaults the heart which holds not righteousness. If your belief be sound, yet if your practice be inconsistent, you may be vanquished. If in doctrine you lose anything, you are in danger; if in the discipline of your hearts you lose anything, you are in peril. The breastplate of righteousness, as it were, covers the heart to protect it from the attack of the enemy. We are told of our Saviour in the 59th of Isaiah, that He put on righteousness as a breastplate; so we conceive you are here commanded to do. If you shut up all the avenues whereby sin enters,—if you strive that your thoughts should never wander into forbidden regions, but should be occupied with heavenly things and heavenly objects,—if, as far as lieth in you, you make it a study that your words should be guarded from anger and passion, and savour of mildness and meekness, and if it be your purpose that your actions should daily display more conformity with Christ's will; if your habits be formed upon the model of the word of God, following not worldly custom, but coming out from it wherever it prove injurious to your soul,—such conduct will prove a breastplate. Put on the breastplate of righteousness, brethren, in defiance of society's ridicule and sneers.

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Put on the breastplate, though you be pointed at with the finger of scorn, and maligned by the tongue of uncharitableness. Put on the breastplate, though eccentricity, hypocrisy, or austerity, be successively laid to your charge. Remember that the powers of darkness are looking for openings against you. Remember that the lamp of faith and love is with difficulty kept burning, and that dominions and powers are in league to extinguish it. Christians, travelling through wicked ways to a home in the skies, have on, at all hazards, the breastplate of righteousness.

And if you have your loins girt about with truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness, forget not to have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of *peace*. Follow peace with all men. Of all things perhaps you will find this most difficult. Not only will you be vexed and harassed with the perversity and contrariety of some, but you will find even your motives misconstrued, and you will often be charged with obstinacy or a bigoted and contradictory spirit by others. Your worse feelings will often prompt you to come forward and return like for like, as the speediest way of securing ultimate peace. This religion permits not—even though thereby the end should be gained, which it seldom is. Knowing that you should make no compromise for the sake of peace, but seeing plainly that a compromise is the thing required by the world if they would give it you, often, very often, you will be unable to decide what course to pursue. Frequently you will see before you a thing to be done or a word to be said, which are respectively right and just to be done or said. But, on the other hand, you feel that the deed had better be undone, and the word unsaid, if you would have peace. It is easy to say that here there should be no delay, for that rectitude and justice should always be preferred to peace. But though this principle be easy of assertion, numberless

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cases, in every Christian's experience, are occurring where it is most difficult of execution. Such a difficulty may, and does frequently, occur to a father and his children, a society and its member or members, a man and his neighbours, and a master and his servants. They ask how are their feet to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. They represent to us the danger of a conflict with flesh and blood, and that to steer a rigidly straight-forward course, if even it were possible, would not be a following of peace. And besides, they consider it quite sufficient to have to wrestle with principalities and powers; they think their own spiritual struggles as much as they can bear, without constant collision with their brethren in the flesh. We have no objection to say that *we strongly sympathize with this earnest desire for peace.* We think that it is *highly unchristian to exalt into a principle* requiring contention, *every little difference of opinion* which must exist between human beings. But where important principles are concerned, these actions and words cannot, without treachery to Christ and his gospel, be left undone or unsaid. We would urge upon followers of peace, that, at all hazards, though hosts encamp against them, they should not fear to do or say what is clearly their duty. We would go further, and venture to say that in the end such will be found most conducive to peace. We believe it to be not only most consistent with the practice of Christ and his apostles, but the course which all experience proves at last the most peaceful, to go, in every point where principle be really involved, the course we conceive to be the true one, if opportunity or circumstances permit of it. By a mild and consistent firmness in word and deed will your feet be most constantly shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

But as you should have your loins girt with truth,—as you should have on the breastplate of righteousness, and

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your feet shod with peace as sandals, above all you are to take *the shield of faith*—faith in the promises of the gospel. Believe in the promises of the gospel to perishing sinners, and that faith will cover the whole man; it will drive all your foes before you, and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a constant firmness, and you shall be saved by that shield from every weapon formed against you, though in other points you prove weak. Have your eyes continually upturned to the Cross of Christ, and thick as hail the darts flaming from infernal abodes may be poured upon you, but as they fall upon that shield they shall be turned aside, and your course shall be prosperous. Christian pilgrims, whom we address, whose destiny it is to travel on an arduous and perilous course, we know not how you can ever arrive successfully at the end of your journey without the shield of faith. Ye travellers of the cross, whose course is one of hardship and difficulty, who have to wend your way through unknown perils, whose journey is encompassed and entangled with innumerable snares and foes invisible, we bid you above all things, and beyond all things, take the shield of faith. Ye soldiers of the cross, whose enemies are principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places,—whose hearts are too favourable to the foe in their inmost core,—whose companions are not to be depended on, but whose antagonists are mighty and united,—we pray of you to take every one the shield of faith and reliance in a superior arm—the arm of your Captain and your King. Above all things, take the shield of faith and confidence in Him who died to save you,—His services depend upon,—His successes rejoice in,—His victory glory over,—His crown exult in. Let faith in the Lord Jesus Christ encompass you, and nothing can eventually happen you to hurt you. By faith it was that Noah moved tranquilly upon the surface of the awful flood. By the shield of faith it was that

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Abraham was preserved, though he knew not whither he went. The shield of faith protected Jacob in all his distresses,—David in all his persecutions,—Lot in his unspeakable sorrows,—Daniel amid his many calamities. Faith lighted up the direful scenes of the crucifixion of a St. Peter and a St. Paul, and threw a mellow softness over the death-fires of a Ridley and a Latimer. Above all, we exhort you to take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And if you have your loins girt about with truth, your breast covered with the plate of righteousness, your feet cased in the sandals of peace, and your body protected with the shield of faith, you must yet take *the helmet of salvation*, or, as it is in Thessalonians, for an helmet the hope of salvation. If there is anything, the tendency of which is to keep you from the strokes of sin and Satan, it is the hope of salvation. Take it as an helmet. We venture to affirm that one of the least-used weapons of your spiritual conflict is this hope. You do not consider over the ultimate prize of victory sufficiently or it would urge you vigorously to conquest and success. So engrossed with earthly hopes is even the earnest Christian, that his hope of salvation often takes amongst them but a rare and unimportant place. And when it takes a more frequent and prominent one, it is a misty hope of some dark uncertain future thing which cannot be defined or grasped. Men do not sufficiently reflect upon their being saved, upon the doom they hope to avoid, and the heaven they hope to gain, as stern realities. Salvation, the process of salvation, the judgment, the acquittal, the reward in heaven, are, we dare say, seldom pondered over by you, as personal things which shall happen to you, Any future temporal joy expected, is turned over in your minds, because you know it to be a thing which shall come; but eternal joy is a faint shadowy outline before you, which you dismiss in

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this form, and never invest with the reality you assign to the other. You thus lose what your Heavenly Father has intended to be your helmet. The hope of salvation; the hope of being pronounced guiltless in Christ Jesus; the hope of its being said to your own individual selves, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into my joy;" the hope of entering with Christ and his saints into the heaven of heavens; the hope of beholding the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; this hope is a piece of Christian armour, which from its value, is called the helmet which crowns the head in the day of battle. Yet how few Christians put it on! How few make the happiness which awaits them in a future world a subject of anything but a vague expectation! How few have a real, earnest, firm, decided hope, a hope of a happiness they have read of in the Book which cannot lie, and which they believe in, study earnestly, and press forward to constantly. How few walk with this helmet ever upon their heads, through this perilous and sorrowing pilgrimage.

But though you be clad with defensive armour, though your loins be girt with truth, your breast with righteousness, your feet with peace, your whole body covered by faith, and your head with the hope of salvation; though the coat of mail be buckled on, the breastplate affixed, the greaves fastened, the shield taken, and the helmet put on, you have need, as soldiers of the Cross, of a weapon of offence. You have need of something whereby you may not only be protected against, but make war upon principalities and powers. Take unto you as the weapon of offence, "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*" This Word is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Let spiritual wickedness rise

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before you, and with this you may hew it in pieces. Let evil desires, the thoughts which come forth from the heart, arise in your breasts, and this sword of the Spirit will discern them and slay them, ere ever in word or deed they become sins. Let infidelity or error come from without, and endeavour to sow its seeds in your hearts, and the Word of God understood and wielded will destroy it. A single text, well-understood and rightly applied, will pierce the heart of an objection or temptation, however strong. Remember how this weapon was proved in the wilderness, by the Captain of your salvation. Remember how He there hewed in pieces the snares of the enemy of souls by repeated and well-directed thrusts of the Spirit's sword. And even so it is now. When the savage and brutal masses of corruption and idolatry over which Satan and his kindred spirits brood, are to be cut off from the face of the earth, what but the Word of God is successfully brought to bear? The sword of the Spirit is found to pierce even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit of heathenism; its joints and marrow are sundered, and in multitudes men discern the thoughts and intents of their hearts, and fall down before the cross. And its effects for the individual Christian are the same. The sword of the Spirit is seen to cut a passage through tempters and temptations by discovering error and pointing out truth, by disconcerting the snares of flesh and blood, and by scaring the enemy himself and putting him to flight. Take unto you, brethren, the sword of the Spirit. Let your knowledge of Scripture, in its doctrinal, and still more in its practical, parts, be thorough and sound. You will find it profitable for correction and instruction in righteousness, that, as men of God, you may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. You will find it a sword mighty to conquer principles and powers of wickedness. When you ponder over it, you ponder over the thoughts of the *good*

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Spirit. What so likely to conquer the evil? When you read it, you read the very words of the *Holy* Ghost. What so likely to drive away the *unholy?* When you act upon it, you carry out the intentions of the Sanctifier and Spirit of *truth*. What so conducive to frustrate the malice of the defiler and spirit of *lies?* Yes! his Word, containing his thoughts, is the Spirit's sword, which the Evil One knows and avoids. The ideas and the words are of heaven, whence he fell: he cannot think of them but with dread and dismay. The words are the words of the Almighty which cast him from his presence. The actions enjoined are those he failed to obey, and which it tortures him to hear of. Why! the artful fiend even sees his own fearful image reflected in that sword, for there he is held up to abhorrence and contempt. He can endure anything but the Word of God; but this he cannot endure. Draw it, then, in the hour of temptation and peril; keep its passages stored up in the memory and ready at hand; summon them in the hour of temptation, and, in view of the Spirit's sword, Satan, effectually resisted, will depart and leave you.

In fine, Christian brethren, take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. May truth and righteousness, peace and faith, the hope of salvation and the Word of God, be with you. May He who provided this excellent armour put it into your hearts to be clad therein. And God grant, that, as humble and faithful pilgrims of the cross, you may safely reach the land of Zion, and there rally round your Captain and King for ever and ever. Amen.

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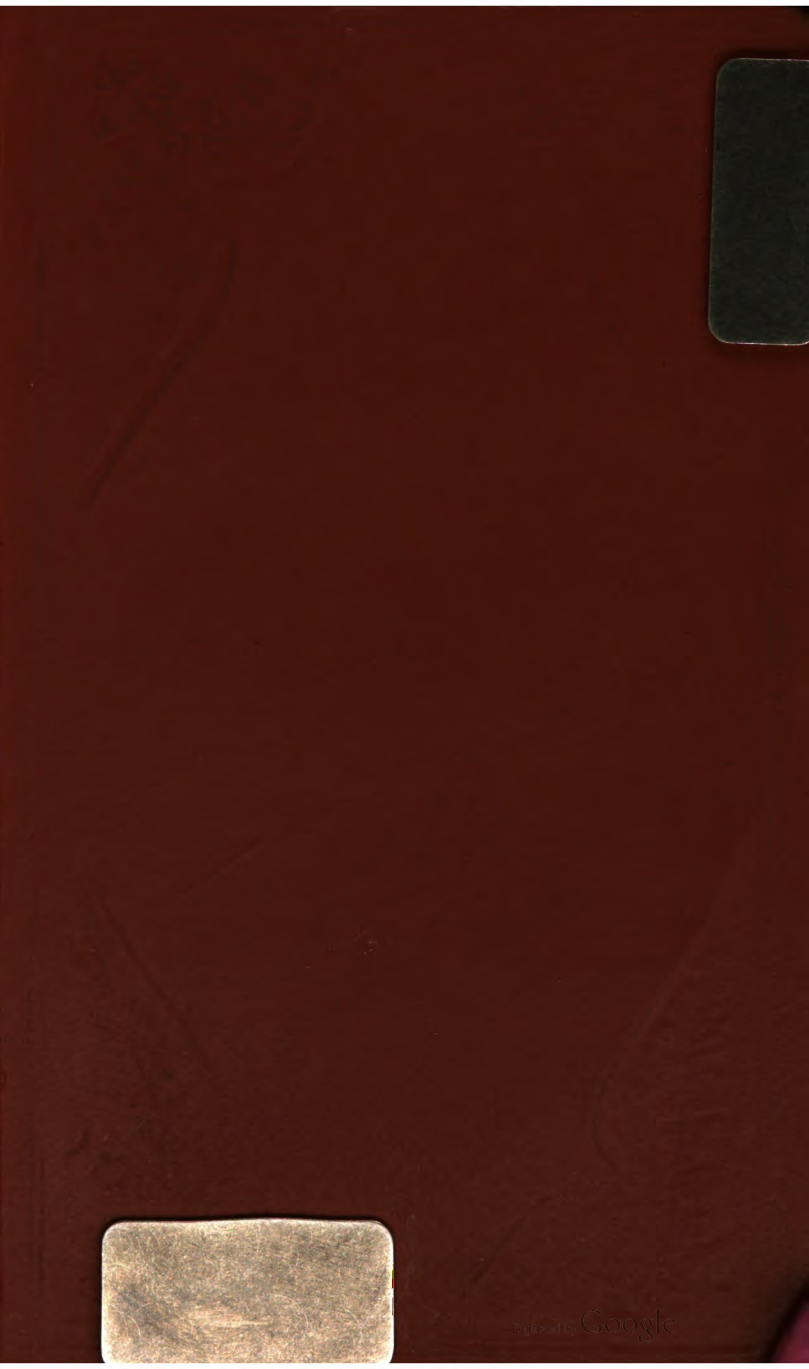
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